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Health Report on the CIA

It was sort of a health report that the retiring chief of the Central Intelligence Agency, Gen. Walter Bedell Smith, gave us a couple of days ago.

The CIA is about the most "critical" agency within the executive branch, save perhaps the National Security Council or the Atomic Energy Commission. So it is heartening to learn that the CIA is as good as any intelligence agency in the world bar one. General Smith excepted only the vast intelligence service which has been built by Russia. It is also heartening to know that there will be continuity of personnel in this sensitive spot. The agency, the general said, is developing a corps of career officers which "in a few years will become the best in the world."

The general's remarks are particularly pertinent at this time when he is passing the reins of CIA to Allen Dulles, who has been the general's deputy for more than two years. It appears that General Smith, who will move over to the State Department to become an assistant to Mr. Dulles' brother, is leaving the agency in the best of hands.

The CIA's primary mission is not that of supersleuth. Rather its job is to coordinate and evaluate the information which funnels into government files from the other military and civilian intelligence bodies. CIA, for example, may get a better picture of Russian intentions by laboriously compiling and studying the Soviet government's buying habits in Europe than it would, perhaps, by parachuting an agent into Russia or its satellites.

Mr. Dulles has compiled a brilliant record in

all aspects of intelligence. During World War II he operated out of Switzerland in directing the work of the U. S. Office of Strategic Services in Central Europe. He has shown that he has both skill, vision, and administrative ability. The latter is particularly necessary if the trend toward making bureaucratic towers of government agencies (which often fall of their own weight) is to be reversed.

We are much indebted to General Smith for a frank appraisal of the state of the CIA's health. We are also encouraged by the stamp of the man who has been chosen to take over for him.

Editorial

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